

## **CLAIMS**

What is claimed is:

1. A method for tracking the distribution of controlled articles from a central inventory by means of electronic communication and data collection, comprising:
  - a) receiving in a system server, a distribution request from a remote distributing representative for distribution of a packet of articles to a distributee, the request comprising a representative identifier, a distributee identifier, and a statement describing the contents of the packet of articles being distributed from a local inventory associated with the distributing representative;
  - b) confirming the authority of the distributing representative to distribute the packet;
  - c) confirming the authority of the distributee to receive the packet;
  - d) evaluating the distribution request for propriety;
  - e) transmitting an authorization code to the distributing representative; and
  - f) deleting a description of the packet's contents from the local inventory and the central inventory.
2. A method of Claim 1 in which the controlled articles are prescription drug samples.
3. A method of Claim 2 in which the distributing representative is a pharmaceutical company's sales representative and the distributees are licensed dispensing practitioners.

4. A method of Claim 1 in which the step of evaluating the distribution request for propriety includes applying specific business logic received from the central inventory's proprietor.
5. A method of Claim 1 in which the request is received from the remote distributing representative over a communication path including a wireless link.
6. A method of Claim 1 including the step of transmitting the request and the authorization code to the central inventory's proprietor.
7. A method of Claim 1 including transmitting a corrective action message to the distributing representative if the evaluation step results in an initial denial of authorization.
8. A method of Claim 1 in which the request is received from the remote distributing representative by means of electronic transmission of information entered on a sample disbursement form.
9. A method of Claim 1 including:
  - a) transmitting the packet from the central inventory to the distributing representative;
  - b) transmitting an acknowledgement of delivery from the distributing representatives to the system server; and
  - c) in the system server, electronically transferring the description of the packet's contents from the central inventory to the local inventory.